

MAINSTREET NOW

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ILLINOIS MAIN STREET

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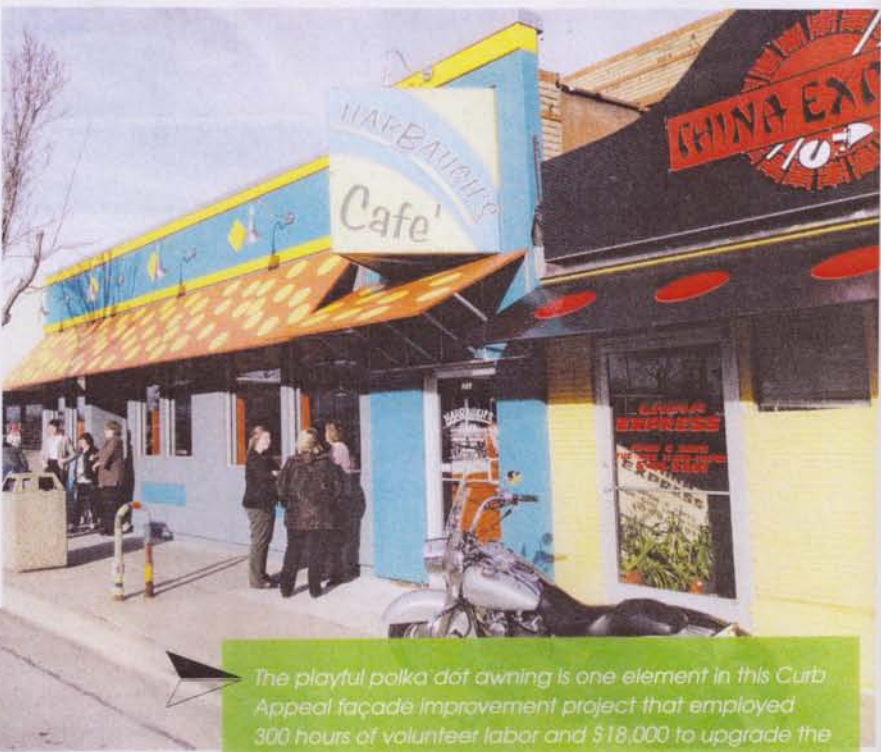
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**Network
Notes**



Lt. Governor Sheila Simon, ambassador for the Illinois Main Street Program and native of Carbondale, shakes hands with Carbondale Main Street volunteer Rob Stace at the Longbranch Coffeehouse, a community gathering spot for more than 15 years.



The playful polka dot awning is one element in this Curb Appeal façade improvement project that employed 300 hours of volunteer labor and \$18,000 to upgrade the appearance of Carbondale's beloved Harbaugh Cafe.

Carbondale. While the café is a Carbondale legend because of its food, the owner admitted that the facade of this rather undistinguished 1940s building was tired and needed more than just a minor redo.

As Meghan Cole, director of Carbondale Main Street, tells it, Laura Harbaugh, the owner of the eponymous cafe, was open to accepting design assistance, even though a 2005 newspaper article called her a “self-proclaimed chick-with-power-tools.” What made this Curb Appeal project so special was the collaboration between owner, contractor, Carbondale Main Street, volunteer labor, and the design committee architect, all of whom helped turn a \$45,000 project into an affordable \$18,000 bill for a willing property owner.

Knitting together two disparate building facades was a conundrum for the café owner. She just didn't know where to start to create a cohesive whole. Enter the Main Street Design Team and their hands-on volunteers. More than 300 hours of volunteer labor by contractor Rob Stace, along with façade renderings by Craig Anz, a professor at the Southern Illinois University School of Architecture and licensed architect, really made this project possible.

Carbondale Main Street provided \$2,000 in matching funds to realize this amazing change in an important downtown business, and the owner provided the rest. The polka dot awning is a playful element in an otherwise sophisticated color palette.

“This project has had a catalytic impact.



CASE STUDY:

Carbondale Main Street: Creating Curb Appeal

By Donna Ann Harris

Façade improvements have been at the heart of Carbondale Main Street's revitalization efforts throughout its 16-year history. Curb Appeal, designed as a joint project of the design and economic restructuring committees, helps to upgrade low-valued properties in downtown.

One such local property was Harbaugh's Café. An 11-year-old restaurant, Harbaugh's is located on the Strip—a.k.a. downtown—and is beloved by both residents and students attending Southern Illinois University at

Other property owners see the change that a larger project can have on the streetscape and are now getting on board,” says Cole. Several owners are planning new projects for 2012.

Working with Illinois Main Street

The newly reconstituted Illinois Main Street staff has visited the community a few times in the last year to provide technical assistance and training for Carbondale Main Street. The annual program assessment was a great start, according to Cole, and she appreciates her positive interactions with both Brandenburg and Martin. Especially memorable was the state conference in Galesburg in October 2011 because of the high-quality educational content available.

“Our ongoing interactions with Kim Watson, the DCEO regional representative, have been great. Kim passes along helpful information about funding opportunities and training offerings,” says Cole.

Main Street’s Looking Up

In addition to all of the physical improvements downtown, Carbondale has a great mix of multi-use buildings that combine historic features with real livability. Carbondale

Main Street Board President Jetaine Rachatanavin owns one of the oldest buildings in Carbondale. He runs a charming establishment called Thai Taste of Carbondale on the lower level and lives upstairs with his wife, Nancy, and one-year-old son, Connor. Rachatanavin says he likes living downtown because of its convenience and energy.

Just a couple of blocks away, a vibrant coffeehouse thrives in another multi-use, historic building. Manager Elaine Ramseyer has run the business as a “community coffee shop” for almost 15 years. Above the Longbranch Coffeehouse is a multi-room office suite that houses community organizations. Along the same historic block, offices, artists’ studios, and apartments thrive on the upper level. The synergy found in Carbondale is one that is very special, with buildings both new and old.

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CASE STUDY:

Berwyn Main Street: Speeding Up a Slow Start

By Donna Ann Harris

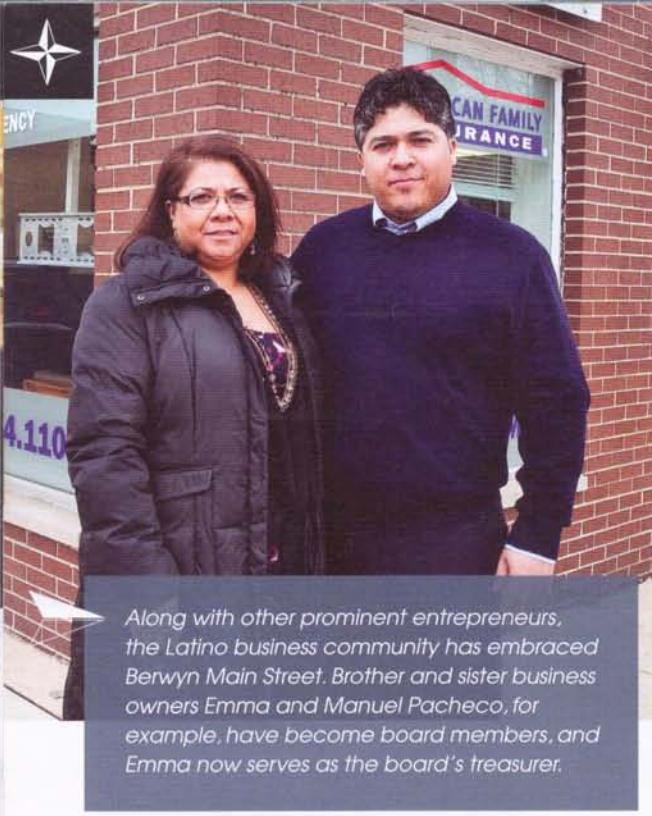
Berwyn is a first-ring Chicago suburb with a thriving Hispanic population and emerging Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender (LGBT) enclave. New residents are attracted to the area because of the extensive and distinctive Chicago bungalow housing stock that is experiencing a rebirth. Cermak Road, the town’s wide thoroughfare, is its heart and home to 295 businesses that cater to everyone, no matter their ethnic, racial, or sexual preferences.

Berwyn Main Street was founded in 2007 when it submitted its application to Illinois Main Street (ILMS). Since that time, the Berwyn Main Street (BMS) program has continued its work in the community by hosting monthly Business Roundtable meetings with stakeholders and recruiting volunteers.

As the new executive director of Berwyn Main Street, Dario Solano’s first meeting was with Bank Manager of BMO Harris Bank Alma Ortiz, who is now President of the BMS Board, to discuss how to grow



After Berwyn Main Street’s annual meeting with business owners, Berwyn Main Street Director Dario Solano (second from right) meets with Berwyn Development Corporation Director Anthony Griffin (far left), Mayor Robert J. Lovero (second from left) and Joseph P. McKeown III of the DCEO’s Office of Regional Economic Development (far right) to discuss the previous year’s challenges and successes and plans for the upcoming year.



Along with other prominent entrepreneurs, the Latino business community has embraced Berwyn Main Street. Brother and sister business owners Emma and Manuel Pacheco, for example, have become board members, and Emma now serves as the board's treasurer.



Old-Fashioned Candies, a popular Berwyn establishment run by Sandra Figatner (pictured above) and her three sisters, has sponsored BMS since the beginning.

the organization. Ortiz was instrumental in creating the monthly roundtable meetings, which brought together the corridor business owners. BMO Harris Bank opened its doors, hosted the meeting, and became a corporate sponsor of many BMS events. Ortiz and her fellow board members immediately began recruiting other stakeholders and partners.

Business Buy-in

A group of prominent and long-time business owners on Cermak Road embraced the values espoused by BMS, while increasing the Latino involvement of businesses. William Hlavacek of James & Williams Jewelers, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in March 2012, became an immediate advocate for the program by sponsoring BMS. Tom Benson, owner of World's Largest Laundromat, (literally, there are more than 100 machines) stepped up to volunteer. Brother and sister business owners Emma Pacheco of American Family Insurance and Manuel Pacheco of Detour Maps became board members, and Emma now serves as the board's treasurer.

Other business owners became sponsors and volunteers. Old Fashioned Candies is a family tradition for Berwyn adults and children because of the delicious chocolates made on the premises. The four sisters who run the establishment—Lynn White, Donna Greenwald, Karyn Downey, and Sandra Figatner—have been sponsors of BMS since the beginning. Craig Cohen, owner of Craig's Shoes, Tele-Tron, and the local Ace Hardware are active supporters. Once

the business community became engaged, it was time to begin the committee work.

The Road to Illinois Main Street Designation

In January 2011, Solano attended an ILMs-organized Regional Roundtable meeting, expecting that technical assistance from Illinois Main Street might become available shortly. "We met with Amy Martin who was leading the Illinois Main Street effort at the time, and were assured that the program would be up and running soon. That gave us hope," says Solano

One of the first services provided to all Illinois Main Street programs was a self-assessment. A team of Main Street professionals visited Berwyn to conduct an all-day review that included interviews with the mayor, city administrator, board president, and a handful of property and business owners. The team also attended an all-committee meeting and took a walking tour of the commercial district.

At the board meeting, the assessment team discussed the board's evaluation of its own performance against the National Trust Main Street Center's 10 accreditation criteria. The self-assessment was a helpful exercise, says Solano. "During the self-assessment, we learned how important committee work plans were to the success of our efforts."

The self-assessment also spawned additional assistance, says Solano, remarking that "we asked immediately for additional training on site." Shortly afterwards, Berwyn hosted

a committee member training session.

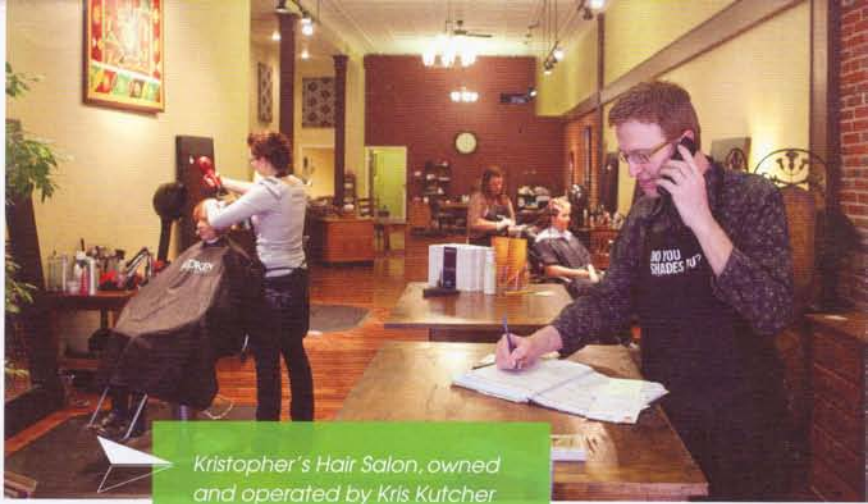
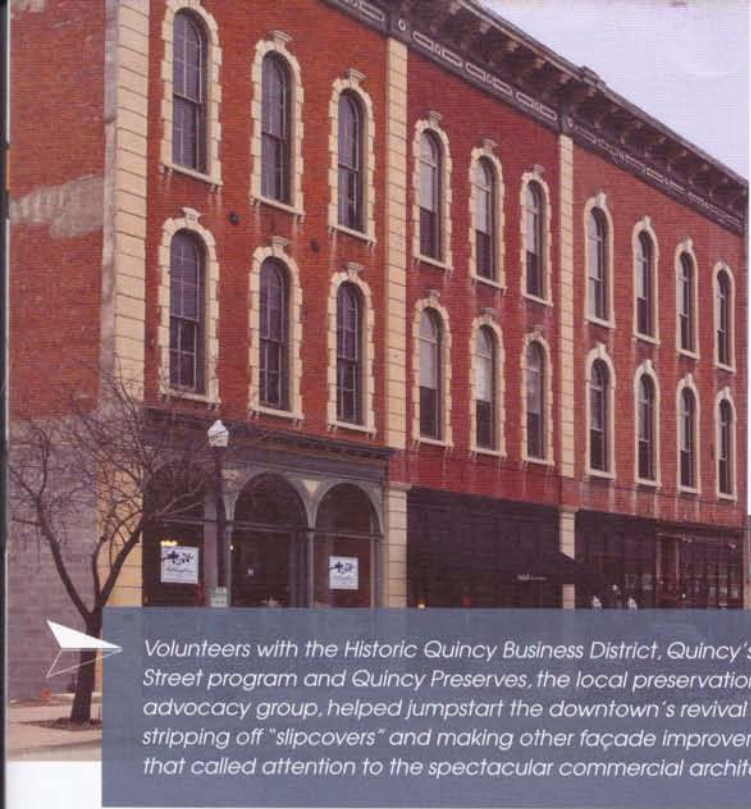
"We had been waiting to be designated as an official Illinois Main Street community for more than three years," Solano recalls. "Finally, the day after our self-assessment, we got the call from the state that we were officially designated, which was a relief. This helped us to obtain our funding from the city for the remainder of the year."

"Now that we are an officially recognized program, we have access to more services," says Solano. "We communicate frequently with Joe McKeown, our DCEO regional representative, who sends us his weekly 'out of the box funding ideas' e-mail which has some interesting opportunities."

"There has been a tremendous change in Illinois Main Street, and we appreciate the assistance we get from the staff there," Solano explains. "We are completing our work plans now and planning some exciting fund-raising programs. We really expect to make great progress this year."

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RE-VITALIZING
 VISION
 STRATEGY
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 EARLIER IN THE
 DEVELOPMENT SERIES



Volunteers with the Historic Quincy Business District, Quincy's Main Street program and Quincy Preserves, the local preservation advocacy group, helped jumpstart the downtown's revival by stripping off "slipcovers" and making other façade improvements that called attention to the spectacular commercial architecture.

Kristopher's Hair Salon, owned and operated by Kris Kutcher (at left, above), is housed in a building remodeled by Kutcher and his partner at the start of downtown's resurgence. The salon brings hundreds of people downtown each week.

SISIRY
PROGRESS
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CASE STUDY:

Historic Quincy Business District: Small Business Saturday in Quincy

By Donna Ann Harris

Founded in 1996, the Historic Quincy Business District (HQBD) is funded by a diverse revenue stream, including: \$50,000 from a special service area taxing district (or business improvement district as it is known in other parts of the country); a city contribution of \$15,000; and \$95,000 of earned and contributed revenue from special events, annual gifts, and fund-raising events. This healthy budget for a city of 40,000 people also takes into account the hundreds of volunteers and years of work that got the organization to this level.

Located on the western edge of the state, on the banks of the Mississippi River, Quincy has a handsome assortment of high-quality historic buildings in varied architectural styles built by generations of 19th and 20th-century entrepreneurs. These delightful buildings continue to grace this preservation-friendly town.

The longstanding partnership between the HQBD and Quincy Preserves, the local preservation advocacy group, developed over the years. To help jumpstart the revival of downtown, the HQBD's Design Committee and Quincy Preserve volunteers dove in with hands-on work to strip off "slipcovers," paint storefronts, and otherwise call attention to the spectacular commercial architecture in the downtown.

Dynamic Partnerships

Over the last three years, the commercial development of downtown Quincy has exploded, adding more than 55 new businesses. Among downtown's business owners are some great entrepreneurs who are working together to make their businesses, and the downtown stronger. One such example can be found in the partnership among Celia's Gifts & More, The Park Bench, and Cellar 21.

Owned by Celia Neff, Celia's Gifts & More is a gift and home décor store in the heart of Quincy's downtown. In the summer of 2011, Quincy was hit by a devastating windstorm that severely damaged all three floors of the building housing Celia's Gifts, including the owner's home on the second story.

During the renovation, a great opportunity presented itself. Sue and Jerry Schmidt own two buildings adjacent to Celia's. Like Celia, the Schmidts live on the second floor of one of their buildings. The Schmidts were in the process of relocating their popular Park Bench restaurant from the opposite side of Celia's to its current location in a building owned by the couple. At the same time, the Schmidts were opening Cellar 21, Quincy's only wine bar, in their adjacent building.

The three decided to team up and rehabilitate the three spaces and open walls, thereby creating a wonderful space where people can shop and dine without having to step outdoors. The three businesses open into each other, creating a unique and memorable space that has become a huge hit with downtown customers.

OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS, THE COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF QUINCY HAS EXPLODED, ADDING MORE THAN 55 NEW BUSINESSES.

Just a few blocks away, Kris Kutcher owns and operates Kristopher's Hair Studio, an upscale salon on Maine Street. Kutcher and his partner remodeled the building a few years ago, at the start of downtown's new resurgence. The salon brings hundreds of people to downtown each week, and serves as a jumping-off point for many groups that spend the day in downtown. Businesses such as these continue to keep the downtown thriving and make the district even more attractive to both customers and other entrepreneurs.

Strategy for the Future

In the past year, the DCEO Regional Outreach staffer, Jacqui Bevelheimer, has helped the HQBD make connections to funding programs and technical assistance for merchants and property owners alike. Like other DCEO Regional Office staff, Bevelheimer is often downtown and attends committee meetings regularly. Her recent involvement in the meetings that led to a new strategic plan helped "steer conversation toward economic development and how DCEO can help us," says Travis Brown, HQBD's executive director.

The new strategic plan has five major initiatives, one of which is to better recruit and communicate with potential customers and tourists. A Smart Phone app is in the works, and more help is on the way to help local business owners become more technologically savvy through workshops and one-on-one assistance.

Promoting Prosperity

Another way that the district promotes itself is through TV advertising. In years past, the local NBC-TV affiliate, WGEM Channel 10, which is located in the district, and HQBD joined together occasionally to produce holiday advertising, but the thumping music of the Historic Quincy Business District's wildly successful three-and-a-half minute video image campaign was a huge departure for the organization.

This image campaign tells the downtown's story with colorful, quick cuts between still and action shots of downtown signs, people, and events throughout the year. The video, which won the Lt. Governor's Award for Excellence in Downtown Revitalization at the 2011 Illinois Main Street State Conference, was shown on both the Comcast cable TV outlets and the local NBC affiliate throughout the fall of 2010, and it's still available on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nyEISDmbmCI>.

When We All Shop Small, It Will Be HUGE!

Brown saw a way to use this video to expand the traditional after Thanksgiving "Black Friday" shopping in downtown Quincy by teaming up with the American Express Small Business Saturday promotion in 2011.

Using the image campaign video as a base, Brown worked with the producer to edit the message down to 30 seconds and bought 65 TV ad spots between November 14th and 26th to promote Small Business Saturday for downtown merchants. Ads were purchased on eight different cable TV stations that fit the consumer profiles of downtown shoppers.

To complement the TV ad buy, HQBD also bought newspaper wrappers for the biggest newspaper ad day of the year—the day before Thanksgiving. This wrapper reiterated the TV ad slogan, "When we all shop small, it will be HUGE!" Seventeen downtown retailers offered specials and discounts on the newspaper wrapper, which drove more shoppers into their stores. The Small Business Saturday ad purchase cost just \$550 for 65 spots, but the buzz from merchants, shoppers, and local residents still lingers.

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CASE STUDY:

P.R.O.U.D: Capitalizing on Heritage Tourism in Pontiac

By Donna Ann Harris

In June 2009, downtown Pontiac hosted the annual Walldogs Meet-Murals on Main Street, where more than 150 mural artists came to town for a four-day extended weekend celebration that resulted in 18 new murals around Pontiac. The Walldogs are a loosely knit group of professional sign painters, muralists, and other artists who gather once a year for a few days to paint murals in a selected city. In 2009, they chose Pontiac.

The annual Walldog Meets bring together artists from around the country and the resulting murals have been known to revitalize whole communities. The event in Pontiac was so successful and the community impact so astounding, that less than a year later, the Walldog artists came back to Pontiac and decided to open the International Walldog Mural and Sign Art Museum, which is the third museum in this central Illinois town. This project received



Sue and Jerry Schmidt, owners of Cellar 21, Quincy's only wine bar, worked with another downtown business owner to rehabilitate three buildings and create a space where people can shop and dine without stepping outdoors. The three businesses—Park Bench Restaurant, Cellar 21, and Cella's Gifts—have become a huge hit with downtown customers.



The ALLEN CANDY CO.

The Art of Confection



Wilbert "Bill" Hall, a Marine who served in WWII, is one of many veterans who serve as volunteer staff at the Livingston County War Museum, which houses displays from World War I to the present. It is one of four museums in Pontiac.

In 2009, downtown Pontiac hosted the annual Walldogs Meet—Murals on Main Street, a four-day celebration that resulted in 18 new murals around the town.

the Lt. Governor's Award for Excellence in Downtown Revitalization at the 2011 Illinois Main Street State Conference. No one knew that the Walldog Meet and opening of their museum would be the tipping point that significantly expanded visitor traffic downtown.

The opening of the Walldog museum, which is devoted to ghost signs and traditional wall art (think roadside signs on buildings), had a dramatic and positive effect on the other two museums downtown. Within a year, museum visitation had grown by 40 percent and thousands of new shoppers flocked to the commercial district surrounding the picturesque courthouse square.

For Pontiac residents, the opening of the mural and sign museum seemed to tie everything together and people are still taking about it. P.R.O.U.D (Pontiac Redeveloping Our United Downtown), the 24-year-old Main Street organization, working alongside their valued and longstanding partners, the City of Pontiac and the Pontiac Tourism Bureau, spent decades laying the groundwork for this "instant" success.

Becoming a Tourist Destination

Today, Pontiac has four local museums: the Route 66 Hall of Fame and Museum and the Livingston County War Museum, both of which opened in 2004; the aforementioned Walldog Art Museum; and the Pontiac-Oakland Automobile Museum & Resource Center, which opened in July 2011. Two historic house museums, the Jones and Yost Houses, are also open to visitors.

All of these visitor attractions are located on or around the historic courthouse square. They are open daily and offer free admission. As a collection, Pontiac's museums have created a heritage tourism destination for close to 20,000 yearly visitors who come to the community along Route 66, the "mother road" so popular in legend and song.

The Mural Museum currently features a black light art exhibit by well-known artist Tang Dongbai, from Beijing, China. Dongbai just recently announced his plan

to create a satellite art school campus in downtown Pontiac, with students coming from all over the United States as well as international locations. Dongbai, who does not speak English, communicates with Pontiac locals using the Google Translate app!

The Route 66 Museum has a host of quirky collections, including a 1972 VW Microbus and a 1966 Chevrolet that was converted into a school bus known as the "Road Yacht." Bob Waldmire, lovingly known as the "Route 66 Hippy Artist," owned both. A collection of Bob's artwork is also on display at the Route 66 museum. Bob's last known commissioned artwork was the Waldmire Memorial Mural, created for the City of Pontiac in May 2011.

Pontiac's newest museum, a display of a Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, car collector's extensive collection of vintage Pontiac and Oakland cars, wouldn't be in Pontiac at all, if not for the quick follow up by Mayor Robert T. Russell. The mayor heard about an off-hand comment by Tim Dye, who mentioned that he was looking for

someplace along Route 66 to display his car collection. Mayor Russell followed up with Dye, and within a year the auto museum with its extensive collection of cars, oil cans and other auto memorabilia, opened in Pontiac. The Pontiac-Oakland Auto Museum brought more than 10,000 visitors to town in its first six months alone. The upcoming celebration of Pontiac's 175th anniversary will most likely bring an explosion of tourism for the city in 2012.

Today, visitors stroll around the charming town square, visit the soon to-be-restored historic courthouse, and shop in the increasing number of retail shops gracing this picture-perfect, small Midwestern town. Everyone is still surprised at the number of motor coach tours (40 last year), group tours (65 last year), and visitors who drive along Route 66 and stop to visit Pontiac's museums and shops. And after Billy Con-

nolly, one of the United Kingdom's top comedians, filmed a special in Pontiac in 2011, there has been a sharp increase in international visitors as well.

Filling a Niche

To capitalize on this explosive growth in heritage tourism, the P.R.O.U.D. economic restructuring committee has been working with their DCEO Regional Office staff member John Whalen, to create a retail store that will sell Illinois-made products. Whalen has put the committee in touch with the McLean County Small Business Development Center for help in putting together a business plan.

Whalen also alerted Lori Fairfield, executive director of P.R.O.U.D. for the past 10 years, to various grant and training opportunities available through the state's economic development agency and other

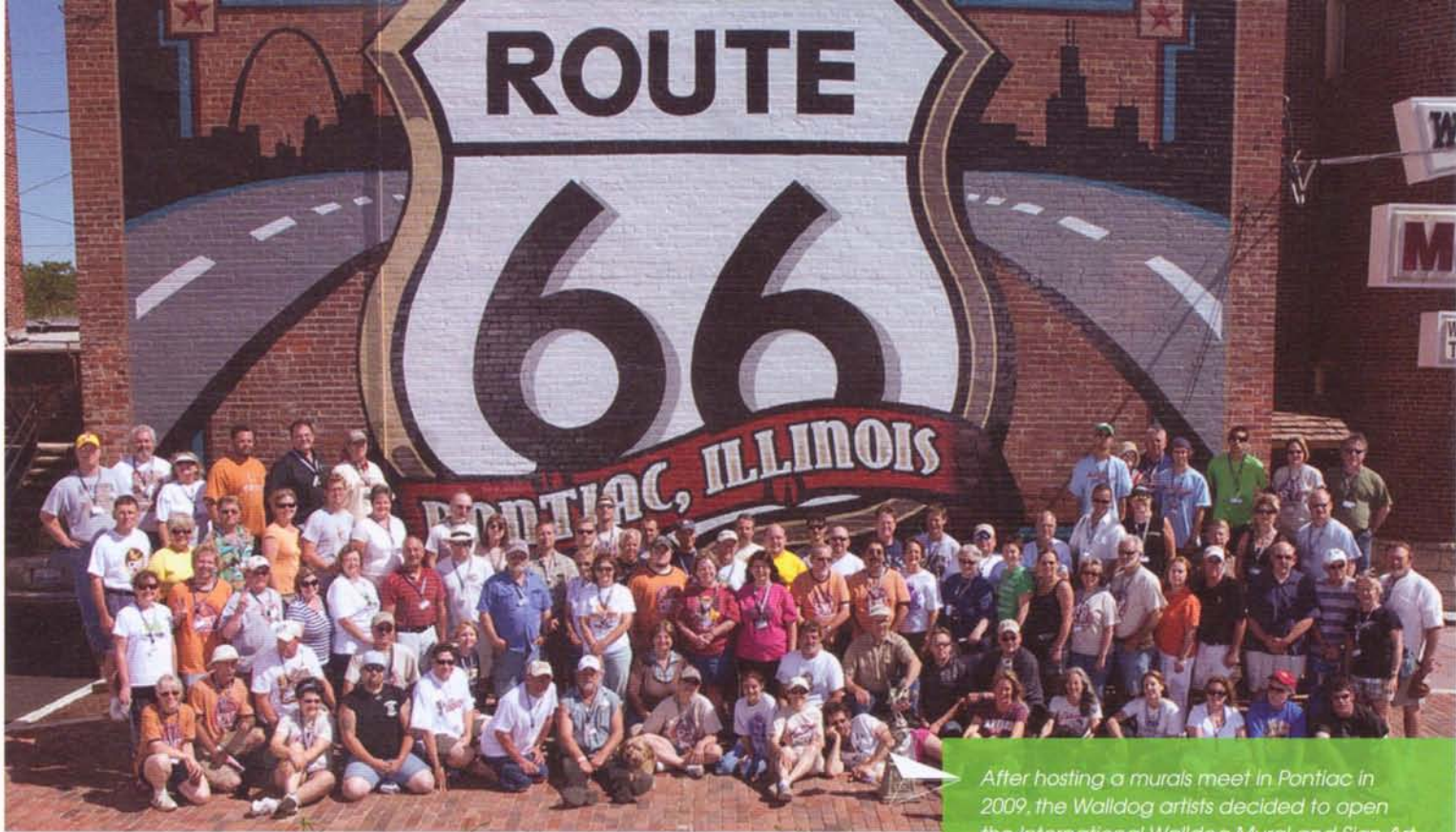
departments. The "P.R.O.U.D. of Illinois Marketplace" retail shop is an important initiative for the Main Street organization because it will provide a wide variety of Route 66 branded merchandise and other tourist goods and will fill a niche in the downtown. It will also sell local food items, which the group hopes will become an important earned revenue source for P.R.O.U.D.'s \$100,000 annual budget. Making opportunities for more retail and restaurant locations around the square is an important initiative of the economic restructuring committee because the district has less than a 1 percent vacancy rate.

Challenges for the Future

P.R.O.U.D. acknowledges that the downtown's very low vacancy rate is both a blessing and a curse. Retailers with great concepts cannot find a place to locate downtown, especially



From left to right: Pontiac Mayor Robert Russell, John Whalen of the DCEO, P.R.O.U.D. Director Lori Fairfield, and Illinois Main Street Coordinator Christina Rogers meet in Pontiac's newest museum, the Pontiac-Oakland Auto Museum, which attracted more than 10,000 visitors in its first six months alone.



After hosting a murals meet in Pontiac in 2009, the Walldog artists decided to open the International Walldog Mural and Sign Art Museum in the Illinois town. Within a year, visitors to Pontiac's museums had grown by 40 percent and thousands of new shoppers were exploring the shops surrounding the picturesque courthouse square.

around the courthouse square and near the Livingston County governmental center. Approximately 300 county employees work at the newly constructed Law and Justice Center and provide much of the weekday foot traffic for the local eateries and other stores. These "mom and pop" shops are open during the traditional Monday to Saturday hours, but most of the stores around the square close on Sunday, one of the highest visitation days for the museums. One of the main objectives of the P.R.O.U.D. of Illinois Marketplace retail shop is to try to recast at least a portion of the downtown's business mix to cater to a tourist market and stay open all weekend.

The "instant" success of downtown Pontiac would not be possible, says Fairfield, without "all four P.R.O.U.D. committees working together to keep our Main Street alive and strong. We are looking to Illinois Main Street now to provide the training and technical assistance we need to help us get to the next level."

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